

Message Text

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SUBJECT: JOURNALIST EXCHANGE

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1. PRESS ATTACHE MET WITH UNION OF JOURNALIST OFFICIALS
MARCH 31 TO DISCUSS EXCHANGE OF JOURNALISTS GROUPS. IN ABSENCE
OF LOSEV, BOARD MEMBER TRISHIN AND ACTING CHIEF OF INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS RUZHINKOV MET EMBOFF. APPOINTMENT REQUESTED WITH LOSEV UPON
HIS RETURN TO MOSCOW

2. TRISHIN REMARKED THAT UNION FEARED EXCHANGE MIGHT HAVE
BEEN VICTIM OF US REASSESSMENT OF "DETENTE" POLICY AND WAS
PLEASED TO SEE THIS NOT THE CASE. EMBOFF REPOLED THAT ENTIRE
WORLD-WIDE BUDGET FOR EXCHANGES HAD BEEN UNDER REVIEW FOR
FISCAL REASONS BUT BOTH EMBASSY AND STATE DEPARTMENT FELT
JOURNALIST EXCHANGE COULD MAKE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO BETTER
UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. TRISHIN SAID
SOVIET JOURNALISTS WOULD DO NOTHING TO CONTRADICT FIRM
SOVIET COMMITMENT TO POLICY OF DETENTE, BUT HE FEARED THAT
COMMENTS OF SOME US POLITICIANS INDICATED THAT AMERICAN
PEOPLE WERE NO LONGER COMMITTED TO THIS POLICY.

3. EMBOFF A) REPLIED THERE WAS NOTING USG COULD DO TO
GUARANTEE HOW US JOURNALISTS WOULD REACT EITHER IN MEETING
SOVIETS DURING TRIP TO US OR DURING US TRIP TO USSR; B)
CITED RECENT POLLS AND POLITICAL OBSERVERS WHICH SEEMED
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TO INDICATE THAT MAJORITY OF AMERICANS FAVOR GENERAL

POLICY OF IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH USSR; C) STATED THAT SUCH EVENTS AS SOVIET ROLE IN ANGOLA DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TOWARD IMPROVING OUR RELATIONS; D) INDICATED THAT NO MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURE HAD REPUDIATED POLICY OF IMPROVING RELATIONS BUT THAT MANY WERE REFLECTING PUBLIC ATTITUDE OF DESIRING TO KNOW WHERE POLICY WAS HEADING IN SPECIFIC TERMS.

4. TRISHIN SAID HE HAD ONLY ASKED QUESTION TO ASCERTAIN WHAT ATMOSPHERE EXISTED FOR UNDERSTANDING SUCH AN IMPORTANT EXCHANGE PROGRAM. EMBOFF REPLIED THIS WAS SPIRIT IN WHICH REPLIES WERE MADE AND THAT US WANTED SOVIET JOURNALISTS TO BE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS AS TO KIND OF QUESTIONS THEY WOULD PROBABLY BE ASKED IN US, OR THAT US JOURNALISTS WOULD BE ASKING HERE.

5. RUZHNIKOV THEN SAID UNION FELT PROGRAM WOULD BE MORE MEANINGFUL IF A SPECIFIC "THEME" WAS AGREED UPON AND THEY SUGGESTED US-USSR RELATIONS. EMBOFF REPLIED THAT, IN HIS OPINION, MORE REALISTIC THEME FOR JUNE TRIP TO US WOULD BE US ELECTIONS, WITH CONCENTRATION OF FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES OF ELECTION. RUZHNIKOV AND TRISHIN AGREED.

6. QUESTION WAS AGAIN RAISED ABOUT SPONSORING ORGANIZATION AND NAME OF VISITOR PROGRAM SERVICE WAS GIVEN AS PROGRAMMING AGENCY. ASSURANCES WERE GIVEN THAT VPS WAS PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION WHICH WOULD SEEK MOST APPROPRIATE PRESS CONTACTS TO ARRANGE PROGRAM. UNION OFFICIALS REQUESTED ADDRESS OF VPS IN ORDER HAVE SOVEMBASSY WASHINGTON MAKE SURE IT IS "NO RADICAL GROUP".

7. TRISHIN ASKED WHERE JOURNALISTS WOULD GO AND WHOM THEY WOULD MEET. EMBOFF SAID PROGRAM WERE BUILT AROUND EXPERIENCES, INTERESTS AND DESIRES OF VISITORS AND ASKED WHEN LATTER WOULD BE AVAILABLE. TRISHIN, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH RUZHNIKOV, THEN STATED "WE ARE AGREED IN PRINCIPLE THAT SOVIET JOURNALISTS WILL VISIT THE USA," AND HE ASKED WHEN US JOURNALISTS WOULD RETURN THE VISIT. EMBOFF SAID PROBABLY IN LATTERHALF OF 1976, BUT AFTER ELECTIONS. TRISHIN SAID INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISTS CONGRESS IN HELSINKI IN SEPTEMBER WOULD MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE

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TO RECEIVE US JOURNALISTS BEFORE OCTOBER. UNION OFFICIALS AGREED THAT, TENTATIVELY, FIVE SOVIET JOURNALISTS WOULD ARRIVE IN US ON FIRST AEROFLOT FLIGHT AFTER JUNE 14.

8. AFTER DISCUSSION, AGREEMENT REACHED THAT NO CORRESPONDENTS PREVIOUSLY RESIDENT IN US WOULD BE IN GROUP, BUT PREVIOUS BRIEF TRIPS TO US WOULD BE POSITIVE FACTOR FOR SOME. TRISHIN OFFERED THAT ALL WOULD SPEAK ENGLISH

BUT NOTED POSSIBILITY OF INTERPRETER/ESCORT. TRISHIN SAID SOVIETS WOULD ALL BE EITHER FOREIGN EDITORS OR "HIGH LEVEL" FOREIGN POLITICAL COMMENTATORS, STATING THAT UNION IS ANXIOUS FOR EXCHANGE TO BEGIN ON BEST POSSIBLE BASIS. HE ASKED AGAIN ABOUT PROGRAM

9. EMBOFF SAID HE WOULD REQUEST TENTATIVE PROGRAM BASED ON THIS INITIAL INFORMATION, BUT REITERATED THAT MORE PARTICULARS ABOUT PARTICIPANTS WOULD BE BASIS FOR CONSTRUCTING PROGRAM. TRISHIN SAID SEEKING SUCH VIPS WOULD NECESSARILY DELAY FINAL SELECTION PROBABLY UNTIL AFTER MAY DAY HOLIDAYS.

10. COMMENT: UNION OF JOURNALISTS IS CLEARLY NOT APPROACHING THIS EXCHANGE LIGHTLY. DISCUSSION LASTED OVER 2 HOURS AND BECAME RATHER TOUCHY AT TIMES ON SUBJECT US ATTITUDE TO DETENTE WITH EMBOFF UNCERTAIN UNTIL LATE IN MEETING THAT EXCHANGE WAS "ON". DURING SAME MEETING, UNION OFFICIALS TURNED DOWN OFFER TO MEET WITH VISITING US JOURNALISM PROFESSORS ON GROUNDS UNION NOT INTERESTED IN "THEORETICAL APPROACH". GIVEN THESE CONSIDERATIONS, EMBASSY MOST ANXIOUS THAT PROGRAMMERS RECOGNIZE CARE AND IMPORTANCE THAT SOVIETS APPEAR TO BE ATTACHING TO EXCHANGE. THOUGH DETAILS ON COMPOSITON OF DELEGATION ARE SLIGHT, EMBASSY URGES DEPARTMENT TAKE STEP OF OUTLINING TENTATIVE PROGRAM FOR EMBASSY/UNION CONSIDERATION. SINCE SOVIETS CANNOT "NAME NAMES", WE CAN OBVIOUSLY GIVE EXCUSE THAT UNTIL THIS DONE FULL PROGRAM PROPOSAL IMPOSSIBLE, BUT EMBASSY HOPEFUL THAT US INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS WILL REFLECT SOVIET INDICATIONS THAT DELEGATION WILL BE "HIGH LEVEL". SEVERAL TIMES TRISHIN STATED "THESE ARE NOT TOURISTS" AND "THESE WILL BE IMPORTANT MEN", AND HE REFERRED TO AN EARLIER TRIP WHICH INCLUDED THE CHIEF EDITORS OF "IZVESTIA" AND "LITERATURNAYA GAZETA".
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